Complete Overhaul

Joseph Henry Sharp’s Taos studio gets a comprehensive renovation in anticipation of a variety of summer events.

Two of Western art’s most famous artists not only helped co-found the Taos Society of Artists together, but their studios were also next door to each other on the same lot in Taos, New Mexico. Famous Taos resident, the Taos Society’s first president, and Joseph Henry Sharp, who first visited Taos in 1893 and encouraged his fellow artists to visit, were two of the most influential members of the six Taos founders. Their contributions to Western art form the foundation of the Couse-Sharp Historic Site, which is made up of Couse’s home, gallery and studio and two of Sharp’s studios, including his first, the Luna Chapel.

The Luna Chapel, built in 1895, served as an art studio for generations of artists since Sharp’s death in 1913. It was recently renovated from top to bottom by the Couse Foundation, which oversees the historic site. “The renovation is complete now, and it was extensive,” says Dawson Packard, Koenig, executive director and curator at the site. “Everything from new flooring, new lighting, environmental controls, new plumbing...we even replastered the walls, and when they work on the mud in there you can’t even see your own arm. It was a major undertaking.”

Koenig says the renovation also preserved two oddities in the original design: a second-floor doorway from a loft that leads to a drop-off on the side of the building, and a “round-square” window, round on the outside and square on the inside. The renovation will be followed on June 10 by a lecture on Sharp at the nearby Harwood Museum of Art, and then the fifth annual Gala Art Auction and Fundraiser at the El Monte Sagrado Resort. Additional events include the exhibition Seldom Seen: Archival Studies on July 5, and also various open house events scheduled for August, September and October, for a full schedule, visit www.couse-sharp.org.

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Sharp says “So what the studio received was really great. Sharp was not only one of the founders of the Taos Society of Artists, he was the one who got Ernest Blumenstein and Kent Crider Phillips and others to come see Taos. He was quite enraptured with it.”

Joseph Henry Sharp, The Life and Work of an American Legend, will feature loaned pieces from the Taos Collection. “The Taos Collection is very much about sharing, about exposing works in the collection to a really broad audience. We work with 40 to 50 institutions around the world,” Smith says. “We have this really great Sharp original for the show that is expected to have 20 to 25 works. The newly renovated gallery will officially open along with the new exhibition on June 9.”